

The Free Congress Foundation Goes East

by Russ Bellant and Louis Wolf

*"Gorbachev himself has mentioned the possibility that he could be removed in as little as two years. Now that there is no real prospect that any replacement for him would try to stop the counter-revolution, it is likely that any replacement would move faster. And that is what Russia — and the world — needs."*¹

With the rapid pace of political change sweeping Eastern Europe and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, many opportunities have emerged for western interests to intervene in the politics of that region. In some cases, such a vacuum has been created that virtual strangers to the area several years ago are now able to actively participate in changing those societies from within.

These interventions are not only being practiced by mainstream organizations. The involvement of the United States Far Right brings with it the potential revival of fascist organizations in the East. One U.S. group, the Free Congress Foundation, has been playing a role in Eastern European and Soviet politics and has ties to Boris Yeltsin and the Inter-Regional Deputies Group (IRG) in the U.S.S.R.

The Free Congress Foundation (FCF) was founded in 1974 by Paul Weyrich as the Committee for the Survival of a Free Congress. Weyrich, who had started the Heritage Foundation the year before, was heavily funded by the Coors family for both organizations.²

Weyrich has kept one foot in the right wing of the Republican Party while dallying with the racist Right and the extreme Christian Right. In 1976, for instance, he and a handful of other New Rightists (William Rusher, Morton Blackwell, Richard Viguerie) attempted to take over the segregationist American Independent Party (AIP), formed by George Wallace in 1968. The AIP was an amalgam of Ku Klux Klan and John Birch Society elements.³ In 1982, Weyrich published an essay in which he stated, "Culturally destructive government policies — racial hiring quotas and busing come to mind as examples — are to the New Right more immediately important in the realm of action, since the damage they can do is enormous and practically irremediable." This apparent defense of "white culture" is dangerously close to theories ad-

vocated by white supremacists today.⁴

FCF's direct involvement in Eastern Europe began about a year ago, at the urging of one of its directors, Robert Kriebel, a retired Connecticut businessman. His Kriebel Foundation backed efforts in late 1989 to send Weyrich and four associates to Hungary, and the Soviet Union, including Estonia, to help train rightwing leaders in ideological and electoral matters.

Weyrich stated upon his return that his visit to Moscow was "the most incredible experience of our lives." There, he worked with the IRG of the Supreme Soviet, a leadership body of the Communist Party. He says that they were unequivocally in favor of private property, a market economy, and the restoration of religion.

The IRG was established by Andrei Sakharov, Boris Yeltsin and others in the summer of 1989. By the end of that year, a training school had been established for candidates to put forward the IRG program. Their electoral success this year propelled Yeltsin to the leadership of the Russian Soviet Socialist Republic. He immediately began forging collaborative relationships with the deeply reactionary leaders of the Lithuanian *Sajudis* party. The IRG has also served as a source of rightwing pressure on Gorbachev to dismantle socialism and the Soviet Union itself.

One of the key dangers in this agenda is the political vacuum it creates, allowing ultra-nationalist forces in a number of republics to increase their influence and possibly take power. Such nationalist and fascist elements are already evident in Lithuania and the Ukraine. In the latter republic, the pro-Nazi Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) has gained influence in several parties and has mobilized large demonstrations that honor OUN leaders who abetted Hitler's war on the eastern front. Similarly, several *Sajudis* deputies served in German-supported military units in 1944, and *Sajudis* has made declarations against ethnic Russians living in Lithuania. According to some reports Poles have also been denigrated.

It should also be noted that "radical reformer" Boris Yeltsin has dallied with *Pamyat*, the foremost Russian fascist group to emerge in the last several years. *Pamyat's* virulent anti-Semitism compares to the crude propaganda of the early German Nazi Party in the 1920s.

The FCF is not entirely disconnected from the history of the OUN. The treasurer of the FCF board is George-Washington University professor Charles Moser. Moser also serves on the editorial advisory board of the *Ukrainian Quarterly*, published by the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America, a group dominated by the OUN. The *Ukrainian*

4. Paul Weyrich, "Blue Collar or Blue Blood? The New Right Compared to the Old Right," in Robert Witaker, ed., *The New Right Papers* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), p. 53.

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1. Warren H. Carroll, "Toward a Free and Christian Russia," *Policy Insight: The Freedom & Democracy Series on Eastern Europe & The Soviet Union*, Vol. 1, Number 5, Free Congress Foundation, August 31, 1990.

2. Alan Crawford, *Thunder on the Right* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), p. 278.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 236-7; *Washington Post*, August 29, 1976, p. A3; *Human Events*, September 11, 1976, pp. 3-4.

Quarterly has praised military units of the German SS and otherwise justified the OUN alliance with the Third Reich, which reflects the fact that the OUN was politically and militarily allied with Hitler and the Nazi occupation of the Ukraine.

The OUN, an international semi-secret cadre organization headquartered in Bavaria, has received financial assistance from the late Franz Joseph Strauss, the rightist head of the Bavarian state. Strauss also had a working relationship with Weyrich. Weyrich fed speeches by Strauss, attacking Germany's détente with the U.S.S.R., to U.S. Senators who would then insert them into the *Congressional Record*. When Strauss came to Washington, Weyrich was the person who helped set up his itinerary.⁵

Another indicator of the anti-democratic character of the FCF's foreign policy is its cosponsorship of *Freedom Fighter* newsletter. *Freedom Fighter*, edited by Charles Moser, is published from FCF offices in conjunction with Jack Wheeler's Freedom Research Foundation. It reports on and supports the military operations of RENAMO in Mozambique, UNITA in Angola, the Nicaraguan *contras*, and similar groups in Southeast Asia, northern Africa and Afghanistan. Particularly telling is their support of the South African sponsored RENAMO operation, which even the State Department has denounced for its scorched earth terror and murder of more than 100,000 Mozambicans.⁶

Despite his long associations with anti-democratic elements, Weyrich has been able to get money from the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), the congressionally-funded agency designed to intervene overtly in the politics of other countries. Most recently, he was granted \$40,000 to pass along to the Initiatives Foundation in Moscow, which is a non-profit affiliate of the IRG. The money is intended to assist in the purchase of communications hardware, including facsimile machines, duplicators, computers, desktop publishers, video cameras, and VCRs and supplies.

In a recent fundraising appeal sent to select potential donors, Weyrich claimed that in every election except Romania, every group they trained won the elections. In a videotape accompanying the letter, he says that FCF trained Boris Yeltsin's campaign manager.

Paul Weyrich has voiced skepticism about the intent of Ronald Reagan's White House heir to perpetuate the ultra-conservative agenda: "Whether George Bush will rise to the occasion is another question."⁷ With this distrust of his party's leaders and of the government's program in Eastern Europe, Weyrich decided in 1989 to join forces with his closest allies in establishing FCF's newest "center," the Center for Freedom and Democracy. This center will work full-time on Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union to "train opposition leaders in the principles and mechanics of democracy."⁸

5. *Washington Post*, May 7, 1975, p. A5.

6. Robert Gersony, "Summary of Mozambican Refugee Accounts of Principally Conflict-Related Experience," Department of State, April 1988.

7. "Rochelle L. Stanfield, "Organizing a Revolution," *National Journal*, March 18, 1989, p. 678.

8. "1989 Annual Report," Free Congress Foundation, p. 12.

Another objective of the Center's programs is: "...teaching free market principles, the Foundation is helping to create economic opportunities for American companies."⁹ The budget of the Center is approximately \$450,000.

In 1989-90 the FCF conducted training programs in:

- **Budapest, Hungary, November 1989:** FCF representatives trained leaders of the Hungarian New Democratic Forum, the Small Holders Party, and the Christian Democratic Party. Free Congress credits itself with enabling the three parties to gain 231 out of 386 seats in the Hungarian Parliament.
- **Moscow, Soviet Union, November 1989:** Over 4 1/2 days in training sessions co-sponsored by FCF and the Academy of National Economy under the Soviet Council of Ministers, some 80 Soviets — one-fourth of whom were members of the Supreme Soviet or the House of Deputies and members of the key opposition force IRG — were given intensive indoctrination in "levels of political thinking, development of tactics, strategy, goals, and decision making in a campaign." The participants were trained in "the political techniques of recruitment of volunteers, organization of volunteers, identification and turnout of volunteers, election day activities, the building of coalitions and methods of communicating with the voters." FCF says unabashedly: "[W]e trained the Yeltsin group in its effort to win control of the Russian Republic."¹⁰
- **Tallinn, Estonia, November 1989:** Over a four-day period FCF trainers met with some 70 members of opposition groups whose main agenda is independence from the U.S.S.R. FCF set forth information on "political strategy and organizational politics." The Estonian Heritage Society, the Estonia National Independence Party, the Popular Front in Tallinn, and the Estonia Citizens Committee provided the trainees.
- **Leipzig, East Germany, February 1990:** FCF representatives met with two conservative groups that were part of an anti-left alliance, the Democratic Awakening Party and the Democratic Social Union. Their discussions focused on "American political techniques" for application during the March 1990 elections. When FCF's people saw how cheap postage was in East Germany, they decided, on the spot, to teach their students the techniques of U.S.-style direct mail campaigning. "Our contacts in East Germany have since indicated that the advice of the Foundation was in their opinion beneficial to the unexpected success they achieved in their elections." In September, FCF hosted a small group of East German opposition figures in Washington, and is planning another meeting in Germany in January.
- **Bucharest, Romania, March 1990:** Some 80 members

9. Internal Center for Freedom and Democracy fundraising document, September 1990.

10. All of the quotations in this and the following bulleted paragraphs are taken from "Summary of Activities," Center for Freedom and Democracy, Free Congress Foundation, approximately September 1990.

of more than a dozen opposition groups were given a four-day seminar on "the political skills to win elections," and "free enterprise and the need for entrepreneurship." Participants were from the National Peasants Party, Free Students Union of the Polytechnical University, Students League, Human Rights League, National Liberal Party, National Salvation Front, and Christian Social Democratic Party. Only a month prior to this meeting, the FCF opened a "field office" in Romania to develop new contacts.

- **Zagreb, Yugoslavia, April 1990:** In the Croatian capital of Zagreb, FCF staffers met with members of the Croatian Democratic Union for discussions in "political techniques," "governing," and building relationships between the regional and federal governments. The group "strongly requested" that the Free Congress people return to convene a conference on governing, to include Croats, Slovenes, Serbs, Montenegrins, and other ethnic groups.
- **Prague, Czechoslovakia, April 1990:** From Zagreb the same FCF team moved to Prague to convene a conference on "techniques, strategies, goals, and objectives in elections" and on "the establishment of democratic institutions." Attending the conference were some 50 persons representing dissident groups such as: the Civic Forum, Public Against Violence (a "parallel organization to the Civic Forum in Slovakia"), Christian Democratic Movement, Christian Democratic Union, Social Democrats, Republican Party of Czechoslovakia, Pan Europe Union, Democratic Initiative, and People for Active European Federation. A follow-up training program in the country was organized in July.
- **Moscow, Leningrad, and Sverdlovsk, Soviet Union, April 1990:** Building on the close working relations that had developed between the Free Congress Foundation and the Inter-Regional Group, some 60 people in Moscow were divided into small groups and taught through role-playing exercises. These exercises focused on governing at the executive, legislative, and judicial levels of local, regional and national government. In Sverdlovsk, 235 persons performed similar role-playing exercises. In Leningrad 45 people attended with the FCF personnel playing the role of the judiciary. In these meetings, participants were lectured about "how free enterprise operates."
- **Sofia, Bulgaria, August 1990:** Paul Weyrich and other FCF staff, together with Robert Kriebel and Detroit businessman Don Fisher, met with approximately one-third of the opposition members in the Parliament. The meeting was attended by Dimitar Loudjev, chief political adviser to President Zhelyu Zhelev.¹¹

Most recently a delegation of six senior Soviet political and economic opposition figures and officials met in Washington, D.C. with senior-level U.S. officials at a conference entitled "The Coming Russian-American Alliance in the Post-Com-

11. "Politics, the Middle East and Eastern Europe," *The Weyrich Insider*, Vol. 2, Number 8, August 30, 1990, pp. 4-6.

unist Era." The October 2-4 conference, co-sponsored by FCF and Independence University, was closed to the media.¹² The delegates were treated to a one-hour meeting with Vice



Credit: Free Congress Foundation

Paul Weyrich (at left) receives IRG executive secretary Arkady Murashev (second from right), and his two aides.

President Dan Quayle.

The Soviet participants included Arkady Murashev who has been schooled by FCF in Moscow. Murashev is the executive secretary of Yeltsin's IRG. Also in attendance were Yeltsin's chief of staff Gennadi Burbulis, National Security Commission chair and former Soviet Navy lieutenant-commander Vladimir Lopatin, Minister of Publishing and Information Mikhail Poltoranin, People's Deputy and head of the Siberia legislative district Stanislav Seleznev, and Commission on Economic Reform chairman S. Sulakshin. Boris Yeltsin, recently injured in an automobile accident, sent a letter to the combined delegates stressing his political program. "We seek to create an economic system based upon universal market mechanisms and the sacred right of every person to property. The entrepreneur will become the chief actor in our economy."¹³ Those in attendance from the U.S. included housing and urban development secretary Jack Kemp, assistant secretary of state John Bolton, deputy energy secretary Henson Moore, assistant commerce secretary for international economic policy Tom Duesterberg, former assistant secretary at the Pentagon Richard Perle, former assistant attorney general William Bradford Reynolds, Burton Yale Pines of the Heritage Foundation, former Governor of Delaware Pierre "Pete" DuPont, and two longtime Cold War advocates from local academia, Charles Moser and Peter Reddaway. Notably, *CAIB* has learned that FCF coordinated the arrangements for the Soviets' visas directly with Dan Quayle's office rather than through the State Department.

What the U.S. Has to Offer

Arkady Murashev has visited FCF's Washington office three times during visits to the U.S. Further, Weyrich has noted that leaders of the newly-formed Russian Christian

12. Press release, Free Congress Foundation, September 20, 1990.

13. Letter from Boris Yeltsin, "To the Participants in the Conference on the Coming Russian-American Alliance," October 1990.

Democratic Party came to FCF offices in July. They told the FCF their party platform and their belief that "only a religious and moral rebirth will open the pathways to beneficial transformations." President Zhelyv Zhelev of Bulgaria was also received at FCF in September.

Those seeking guidance from the FCF for a "religious and moral rebirth" would be well advised to consider the company that FCF keeps.

The Free Congress Foundation is generally identified with the "secular" New Right rather than the "Religious" New Right, but in fact it melds both currents of rightist activity. Although structurally one organization, FCF could be seen as a dozen semi-independent groups housed in one office complex and with one boss.

The FCF divides many of its activities into "Centers." There are centers for Government and Politics; Law and Democracy; Cultural Conservatism; State Policy; Conservative Governance; Child and Family Policy; Foreign Policy; Transportation Policy; Catholic Policy; and the new Freedom and Democracy.

In the FCF's 1988 Annual Report, the Center for Catholic Policy states: "The public policy influence and activity of the Catholic Church in America often runs counter to the interests of Catholic laity. The Center for Catholic Policy seeks to instruct conservative Catholic laity how to become influential in shaping public policy stands taken by the Church." The FCF report says that a "network of some forty national Catholic organizations, institutions and publications which share a generally conservative viewpoint" was formed by FCF in January 1988, and called the Siena Group.

According to the FCF:

Among the top priorities of the Siena Group in 1988 was mobilizing opposition to a US Catholic Conference statement on AIDS policy which was favorable to the objectives of the gay and lesbian rights movement. Siena Group participants convinced the bishops to set aside the AIDS document.

Finally, FCF's insinuation into the politics of the East must be judged by their selection of Laszlo Pasztor to head their Liberation Support Alliance, "which seeks to liberate peoples in Central and Eastern European Nations."¹⁴

Pasztor's involvement in East European politics began in World War II when he joined the youth organization of the Arrow Cross, the Nazi party of Hungary. When the Arrow Cross was installed in power by a German commando operation, Pasztor was sent to Berlin to help facilitate the liaison between the Arrow Cross and Hitler.

Pasztor was tried and served two years in jail for his Arrow Cross activities after an anticommunist government was elected in Hungary in 1945. He eventually came to the U.S. and established the ethnic arm of the Republican National Committee for Richard Nixon. He brought other Nazi col-

14. Coalitions for America brochure, undated. For background on Pasztor, see Chip Berlet and Holly Sklar, "Harbinger of Democracy? The NED's Ex-Nazi Adviser," *The Nation*, April 2, 1990, pp. 450-51.

laborators from the eastern front into the GOP. Some were later found to have participated in mass murder during the war.

The dormant Arrow Cross has surfaced again in Hungary, where there have been attempts to lift the ban on the Nazi organization. Pasztor spent several months in Hungary. When Weyrich later conducted training there, he was provided a list of Pasztor's contacts inside the country. Weyrich reports that he conducted training for the recently formed and now governing party, New Democratic Forum.

Pasztor claims to have assisted some of his friends in Hungary in getting NED funding through his advisory position with NED. In 1989 he spoke at the Heritage Foundation under the sponsorship of the Anti-Bolshevik Bloc of Nations (ABN), a multinational umbrella organization of emigré fascists and Nazis founded in alliance with Hitler in 1943. It is led by the OUN. Pasztor spoke for the "Hungarian organization" of ABN,¹⁵ which is the Arrow Cross.

Conclusion

Those leaders and cadre trained over the last year by Free Congress Foundation's traveling tutors were led by Paul Weyrich and company to believe in themselves and the goals set before them. However, they aren't on Weyrich's mailing list of key opinion shapers, so they aren't aware of his real assessment of them:

But of course, Communists will behave as Communists and they are going to try to undercut democratic forces whenever they can. Democratic leaders such as Havel, Zhelev, or Landsberger [*sic*] are not entirely prepared to cope with such situations. In fact, former Communists such as Boris Yeltsin appear to be more capable of producing real change than these Eastern European leaders are mainly because, as Communists, they learned how to use power. There are only a few non-Communists, like Arkady Murashev, who know how to do things right.¹⁶

FCF's involvement in Eastern Europe has begun as a result of their expertise in electing U.S. conservatives to office. This campaign expertise has enhanced their reputation in national politics. But their ties, which suggest an ultimately anti-democratic agenda, including their emigré fascist and Christian fascist involvement, have gone unexamined. FCF's advocacy of a narrow range of social conformity and literal repression of non-conformists in the U.S. can be found in their detailed literature on the subject.

It is reasonable to expect that those in the East seeking aid for the new arena of electoral activity may not know FCF's deeper agenda. It is up to Americans to communicate that warning, and to challenge NED tax dollars to FCF that certainly legitimize it in the eyes of some political groups in the East. ●

15. *ABN Correspondence* (bimonthly journal), May-June 1989, p. 14.

16. *Op. cit.*, n. 11, p. 9.